regional level were organized on WTO matters in association with the apex Chambers of Commerce and Industry to build up a national consensus on our approach to the Third Ministerial Conference of the WTO.

The Indian delegation to WTO had included for the first time, representatives of the apex Industry associations and some Hon'ble Membes of Parliament, including those from Opposition Parties.

Pending Patent Cases

1124. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that several patenting cases are pending;

(b) if so, the number of cases pending during the last three years; and

(c) what steps are being taken to clear the pending cases in the Patent Offices expeditiously?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The number of cases pending are as below:

Year	Pending as at the end of March
1996-97	20619
1997-98	28027
1998-99	33276

(c) Government intends to prioritise the clearance of backlog of patent applications in a time bound manner.

Globalsation of Patent Offices

1125. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to initiate globalisation of our patent offices keeping in view the changing scenario of patenting abroad; and